

Life Span
Psychological Services, PC

October 13, 2003

Deirdre A. Agnew, Atty.
1450 E. Boot Road
Bldg. 400-A
West Chester, PA 19380

RE: **JOSHUA. SHUMAN**
DOB: 9/17/86

Dear Atty. Agnew:

This letter is written at your request in order to summarize my contacts with Joshua Shuman.

My first contact with Josh was between December 19, 2000 and February 14, 2001, when we saw each other on four occasions for psychotherapy. At that time, Josh came with his mother because she was concerned with his unwillingness to communicate regarding feelings and emotions. Throughout our four sessions, Josh was communicative and talkative yet somewhat shy in his approach to communicating and solving problems with mom. In our four sessions, he was able to share feelings with mom and found that this was a safe and positive thing to do. At that time, therapy was discontinued by mutual agreement, and the diagnosis was Adjustment Disorder with Depression. Adjustment Disorders are among the most minor psychological diagnoses used by therapists.

My next set of contacts with Josh began on December 11, 2001, and ended on January 23, 2002. During this time, we saw each other for psychotherapy on five occasions. Josh returned to treatment because of an incident involving "inappropriate behavior" with a female student at Penn Manor. Josh described that while a video was being shown in a classroom, with other students present, he and a young lady touched each other in the genital area with their hands. When Josh returned to school, he indicated that he was called to the office and asked by Mr. Gale, a school principal, what had happened the previous day. Josh indicated that Mr. Gale said to him that if he did not tell the truth, the police would be called. Josh indicates that he told Mr. Gale very accurately and truthfully what had happened. Josh indicates that he was then placed in a room from 10:15 AM until 2:15 PM. At some point, Josh indicated that another principal, Mr. Baddick, asked Josh if he touched the girl to "get a rise". Mr. Baddick then said to Josh that he was trying to understand Josh's mindset in terms of his behavior.

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As Josh described what had happened, he was clearly upset and almost tearful. He expressed that he knows that the contact he had with the student was inappropriate at the time and place. Josh was extremely worried about how students will treat him during his return to school. He was embarrassed and worried about the kind of things that his fellow students would say. Josh was shocked and disappointed by the reaction of Penn Manor administration in that that he told the truth, yet was punished for his behavior. He was also upset that the young lady involved in the same situation and, who was involved in similar behavior, received no punishment at all. Josh was grounded and had other consequences at home from his mother, and expected this to occur. However, he did not expect the reaction such as he received from high school administration. Compared to my prior contacts with Josh, our December 11 appointment was certainly the most emotionally upset and anxious I have seen in Josh in any of my contacts with him.

Other therapy between December 11, 2001, and January 23, 2002, focused on social difficulties Josh is having at school. He was being teased and harassed by other students and initially had difficulty handling this. Throughout our discussions in therapy and with the assistance of his mother, Josh was eventually able to handle these things well.

By mutual agreement on January 23, 2002, we decided to discontinue therapy as Josh was managing his feelings and emotions in a positive and productive way. Diagnosis at that time remained Adjustment Disorder with Depression, however, Josh continued to show mild symptoms of distress and anxiety.

My third set of contacts with Josh has been four appointments between July 9, 2003, and September 22, 2003. Josh has returned to treatment because he is planning to re-enroll at Penn Manor to finish his Senior year. He indicates that he is concerned about how he would be treated by students and administration at Penn Manor. Josh is goal-directed in that he wants to complete the classes necessary in order for him to graduate from high school. Josh and I discussed at length that he has not been a behavior problem throughout his high school career, and that we would not expect any issues initiated by him. Current working diagnosis remains Adjustment Disorder with Depression.

I have known Josh Shuman since December 2000, and have met with him on thirteen occasions for psychotherapy during that time. Joshua Shuman throughout this time has been a polite, sensitive, goal-directed, hard-working young man. Throughout our contacts, he has been employed at a farm or at some other job in order to meet some financial goal he has set for himself. Since the incident at Penn Manor in December 2001, Josh appears more cautious and less willing to take appropriate risks. He has struggled academically in cyberschool during the 2002-2003 school year. Josh is less trustful of people in authority and looks back at the situation at Penn Manor feeling that he told the truth, as was asked and expected, yet was punished for telling the truth. Josh worries that in the future, when situations occur through his life, that his version of what happened might not be taken into account as strongly as other people's.

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Josh has a very positive and supportive relationship with his mother, and this is something I would see continuing and being stronger as Josh becomes an adult.

The alleged incident for which Josh was disciplined in December 2001 is certainly not characteristic of Josh. I see Josh as a young man of normal social and emotional development. I would expect that he would be more shy around females than most boys his age. My impression of him is that, in a relationship with a female, he would likely let the female set the pace in the relationship and be more of a follower than someone who would be leading in those situations. Josh is a young man who does not have severe mental health or emotional issues. Throughout our contacts, he has situational difficulties, and he and his mother have worked together to resolve these issues.

In my opinion, within a reasonable degree of professional certainty, Josh Shuman was most distressed between December 11, 2001, and January 23, 2002. This opinion is based on comparing his emotions and feelings during that time with the other two courses of treatment that we have had together. The major issues that Josh pointed out, and continues to point out, are issues of fairness in that he and the young lady both engaged in the same actions, yet he was the only one punished. He is concerned about a suspension and sexual harassment charge being part of his high school record, and how this will impact his future goals and plans. Prior to this incident, Josh had almost a naive trust of authority and administration and this has certainly been dramatically effective as Josh no longer trusts authority. Josh has made a positive adjustment in his return to Penn Manor, however, he indicates that he is very cautious about things he says to other kids, and he is very cautious about social situations in which he places himself. He is certainly more guarded and protective of himself than he was prior to December 2001. It is my feeling that many of these things will continue but that over time and with further experience, they will become less severe. Again, I would note that in my three contacts with Josh, he was emotionally more distraught on December 11, 2001, than at any other time in our therapy.

Please contact me if you require further information.

Sincerely,

Hubert R. Wood, MS, LPC

HRW/mhk